

IN THE CLAIMS:

The text of all pending claims, (including withdrawn claims) is set forth below. Cancelled and not entered claims are indicated with claim number and status only. The claims as listed below show added text with underlining and deleted text with ~~strike through~~. The status of each claim is indicated with one of (original), (currently amended), (cancelled), (withdrawn), (new), (previously presented), or (not entered).

Please AMEND claims 14-21 and ADD 22-24 in accordance with the following:

1-13. (CANCELLED)

14. (CURRENTLY AMENDED) A server ~~used by its being connected~~ with a plurality of multifunction machines via a network ~~to a plurality of multifunction machines,~~ the server comprising:

a plurality of request processing ~~means for processing units that process~~ requests received from ~~said plurality of at least one of the~~ multifunction machines ~~via the network,~~ said request processing means assigning, when receiving the request from said multifunction machine, ~~said multifunction machine having transmitted the request to said request processing means itself;~~

an assigning means for sending to said unit that assigns the request processing unit to the multifunction machine based on the request, and sends a completion-of-assignment notification to the multifunction machine, the completion-of-assignment notification indicating that an operation in linkage via the network becomes possible; and processing of the request is possible;

an assignment canceling means for canceling, unit that cancels the assignment of the request processing unit to the multifunction machine when the request is not received from said assigned multifunction machine even after within a predetermined has elapsed, the assignment of said multifunction machine by said request processing means amount of time; and

an information recorder that has multifunction connection information, the multifunction connection information having information indicative of whether the multifunction machine is in an operable state in linkage with the server, wherein the request is received based on the multifunction connection information.

15. (CURRENTLY AMENDED) A The server according to claim 14, wherein said

~~assigning means includes means for sending to said multifunction machine the completion of assignment notification containing~~ has information on processes executable by said of a function, and the function is processable by the server.

16. (CURRENTLY AMENDED) A The server according to claim 14, the server further comprising:

~~means, for faxing the image data, having a function of faxing, when given a request for a FAX transmission from said multifunction machine assigned by said request processing means, the image data received from said multifunction machine~~ a fax that faxes image data;

wherein the request processing unit controls the fax and sends the image data received from the multifunction machine when the request processing unit receives the request to fax from the multifunction machine.

17. (CURRENTLY AMENDED) A The server according to any one of claims claim 14, further comprising:

~~means, for recording plural pieces of image data, having a function of recording, when said multifunction requests said request processing means to register the image data, the image data received from said multifunction machine~~ a recorder that records image data;

wherein the request processing unit records the image data received from the multifunction machine on the recorder when the request processing unit receives the request from the multifunction machine to record the image data.

18. (CURRENTLY AMENDED) A The server according to any one of claims claim 14, further comprising:

~~recording means for recording~~ a utilizing situation recorder that records utilizing situation information received from the plurality of multifunction machines, the utilizing situation information received from said plurality of multifunction machines being information how often each of the multifunction machines is used; and

a utilizing situation information transmitting means for transmitting transmitter that transmits, when any one of nodes makes a request for transmitting the utilizing situation information, the utilizing situation information back to said node having transmitted the a transmission request.

19. (CURRENTLY AMENDED) A The server according to any one of claim 18, further comprising: wherein the utilizing situation information periodic transmitting means for transmitting transmitter transmits the utilizing situation information to the node in accordance with a predetermined schedule even when there is no transmission request from said node.

20. (CURRENTLY AMENDED) A The server according to claims claim 18, wherein said utilizing situation information recording means has non-volatile recording means, and further includes the server further comprising:

a destruction detecting means for detecting unit that detects a destruction of the information recorded in said on the utilizing situation information recording means recorder; and

a utilizing situation information managing means for, when detecting the destruction of the information, requesting unit that requests each of said the multifunction machines to transmit the utilizing situation information when the destruction detecting unit detects the destruction, and again recording said records the transmitted utilizing situation information recording means with on the utilizing situation information of said each multifunction machine which is received as a response to the above request recorder.

21. (CURRENTLY AMENDED) A program recording storage medium recorded with readable by a computer capable of communicating with other apparatuses via a network, for making said computer function as a server, said program comprising, the storage medium storing a program of instructions executable by the computer to perform a function as a server, the function comprising:

a request processing step of processing requests received from a plurality of multifunction machines via the network, and assigning, when receiving the request from any one of said multifunction machines, said by at least one of the request processing units, the request being received from at least one of the multifunction machine having transmitted the request machines;

a step of sending to said multifunction machine a completion of assignment notification indicating that an operation in linkage via the network becomes possible assigning the request processing unit to the multifunction machine based on the request, and sending a completion of assignment notification to the multifunction machine, the completion of assignment notification indicating that processing of the request is possible; and

a step of canceling, when the request is not received from said assigned multifunction

~~machine even after a predetermined has elapsed, the assignment of said multifunction machine in said request processing step~~canceling the assignment of the request processing unit to the multifunction machine when the request is not received within a predetermined amount of time, and

recording and having multifunction connection information, the multifunction connection information indicating whether the multifunction machine is in an operable state in linkage with the server,

wherein the request is received based on the multifunction connection information.

22. (NEW) A method of executing multiple functions using multifunction apparatuses connected to each other via a network, comprising:

assigning a processing request to a usable multifunction apparatus among the multifunction apparatuses based on operation content of the request and transmitting a notification indicative of the assignment to the usable multifunction apparatus; and

executing a function via the usable multifunction apparatus in accordance with the assigned request.

23. (NEW) The server according to claim 14, wherein the server has information of each of the multifunction machines, and the information has at least one of a status of the multifunction machine, a type of executable job, an address on the network, user information and a type of connection.

24. (NEW) A server connected with a plurality of multifunction machines via a network, the server comprising:

a plurality of request processing units that process a request received from at least one of the multifunction machines;

an assigning unit that assigns at least one of the request processing units to the multifunction machine based on the request, and sends a completion-of-assignment notification to the multifunction machine, the completion-of-assignment indicating that processing of the request is possible; and

an assignment canceling unit that cancels the assignment of the request processing unit to the multifunction machine when the request is not received within a predetermined amount of time,

wherein the server has at least one of option information, multifunction machine

connection information, non-self system linkage information, and intra self-system registration address information, the option information is information of a function executable by the server, the multifunction machine, the non-self system linkage information is used when the server accessed another system, the intro self-system registration address information is used when the server accesses intra self-system.